

BRO NEVEZ

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE
NEWSLETTER OF THE U.S. BRANCH

The United Nations declares 2008
The International Year of Languages
Languages Matter!



KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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EDITOR'S NOTE

My apologies for getting this newsletter out so late in February. The new year has been a very busy one for me! Bloavezh mat!

The challenge is not trying to find enough news and information to put into Bro Nevez, but finding time to digest the wealth of information I receive in newsletters and magazines from Brittany, and on internet sites. And book or CD reviews require a great deal of time beyond simply finishing a 500-page book or listening casually to 60 minutes of music. For this issue I had the chance to review some particularly good writings and music-making from Brittany. Of particular note is the new book by Jean-Jacques Monnier. *Résistance et conscience bretonne 1940-1945 – L'hermine contre la croix gammé*, which serves as a much needed antidote to Breton-bashing in the press where anyone promoting Breton identity and culture is called a Nazi.

I have a big pile of thick and interesting books still to review so I look forward to sharing those with you in May. - Lois

Save the Date if you're on the East Coast

Join U.S. ICDBL Members at two Celtic festivals this spring in Maryland and Virginia:

The Celtic Society of Southern Maryland
30th Celtic Festival and Highland Gathering
Saturday, April 26, 2008
St. Leonard, Maryland
www.cssm.org

15th Anniversary Potomac Celtic Festival
Saturday, June 14, 2008
Leesburg, Virginia
www.pcfest.org

News about the Breton Language

Lois Kuter

2008: International Year of Languages

In May 2007 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 to be the International Year of Languages. UNESCO was named the lead organization to engage governments, UN organizations, educational institutions and groups of all kinds to become active in promoting and protecting all languages – especially those most endangered. As noted on the UNESCO website, 50% of some 6,700 languages spoken today in the world are threatened with extinction. One language ceases to be spoken on average every two weeks. 96% of the world's languages are spoken by only 4% of the world's population.

International Mother Language Day has been celebrated each year since 2000 on February 21st and this is the launch date for the Year of Languages. For this February 21st UNESCO organized a seminar with the Council of Europe to look at linguistic treaties such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The French Constitution Still Blocking the Road for the Breton Language

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992. In May 1999 France signed the Charter but in June 1999 the French Constitutional Council voted against ratifying it, stating that it was counter to the French Constitution, notably Article 2 with states: "the language of the Republic is French." It does not matter that the European Charter stipulates that the encouragement of regional or minority languages cannot be done to the detriment of official languages and the need for citizens of any given state to learn those languages.

Marc Le Fur, a Deputy to the French National Assembly from the Côtes d'Armor, has put in three proposals to modify the French constitution so that its "French only" wording would not continue to block ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The first two in January 2005 and December 2006 were defeated. This January Marc Le Fur (UMP Party) and Marylise Lebranchu (PS Party) both prepared amendments for the constitution that were intended to allow France to sign the Charter. The introduction of these amendments was rejected by the French Assembly with the idea that this was simply not the right time to consider them and that any constitutional changes done right now needed to be made to pave the

way for France to ratify the Lisbon Treaty (see below). While 136 Deputies (almost 1/4th) of the National Assembly backed the two amendments, it never seems to be the "right time" to consider the defense of regional languages in France.

But there is hope. A promise was given that in the spring, when discussion of changes to the French Constitution will be taken up again, the National Assembly will discuss regional languages. It is hoped that the government will finally address the need to officially recognize the many languages within its borders (and in overseas territories) and its duty to protect their future.

Can Europe Come to the Rescue: What is the Lisbon Treaty and What Can It Do for the Breton Language?

The following article by Davyth Hicks for EuroLang (www.eurolang.net) explains clearly how this new treaty may (or may not) protect languages of Europe.

The Lisbon Treaty and linguistic rights, EuroLang talks to the Council of Europe

Davyth Hicks, EuroLang, 23 January 2008

December saw the signing of the Charter of Fundamental Rights as well as the signing of the EU's new Reform Treaty, named the Lisbon Treaty. If ratified by EU member states it will give a legal base to the new Charter as well as enshrining respect for linguistic and cultural diversity in EU law.

For language campaigners Article 21 of the Charter clearly embeds linguistic rights in the EU and gives grounds for appeal in cases of discrimination on the grounds of language and being a "member of a national minority". Appeals will go to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Article 21.1 states: 1. "Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited." Article 22 states that, "The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity."

In addition, Art 2:3 of the Lisbon Treaty itself states that the EU: "shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced."

It is important to emphasise that these rights will only apply to acts and legislation emanating from the EU and not to domestic State legislation. The Charter will not apply in the UK and Poland who have both opted out. However, it will, in theory, give those language groups

which are still continuously discriminated against, such as Breton and Occitan speakers in France, some grounds for redress if they are discriminated against in any EU based acts and legislation.

The Charter will usefully complement other international instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights, to which the EU is also likely to become a party.

In addition, the new Agency for Fundamental Rights will be able to monitor and make reports on discrimination, as well as general awareness raising. It will not be able to intervene on behalf of citizens but, according to an FRA document, it aims to help the EU and its member states, "respect fully fundamental rights when they take measures or formulate courses of action. Therefore, the FRA's task is to provide advice based on its expertise and as a result of its activities."

However, how useful will these new legal instruments be for those seeking to protect their language rights and to revitalise their language? Eurolang interviewed Council of Europe (CoE) representative in Brussels, Humbert de Biolley, on the matter.

Eurolang: Referring to the Reform Treaty (Art 3.3) which obliges EU institutions and member states (as EU members) to 'respect linguistic diversity', and knowing that 'respect' can have a very loose meaning. We see this as a step forward for language rights, if of course it is ratified. But from the point of view of the Council of Europe, is it going to be enough for Breton speakers, for example, to take a member state (France) to the ECHR because of France's lack of respect for linguistic diversity?

Council of Europe: The reform treaty will broaden the influence of the EU in the field of individual rights, notably by giving a binding effect to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. EU institutions, and legal norms issued by them, will be bound to respect the Charter. The European Court of Justice will have its competence consecutively enlarged.

EU member States remain committed to respect their international legal commitments, including the ones derived from ECHR and protected by the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights. In this perspective, the entry into force of the reform treaty will, in my view, not change much in the relations between CoE member States and the European Court of HR.

In the meantime, a memorandum of understanding between the EU and the CoE was signed in May 2007 in order to strengthen the cooperation between the two organisations. Reinforced co-operation and better synergies between the Organisations' activities should

be beneficial to the promotion of common values in the fields of citizens' rights.

Eurolang: In the Council of Europe's opinion, what effect will ratification of the Reform Treaty have on the implementation of the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) and Convention for National Minorities (FCNM)? We assume that it will help to bring further ratifications and help to speed up the process whereby specified languages can move up from Part 2 to Part 3 of the Charter, and that generally the Treaty acts to support and strengthen the ECRML and FCNM.

Council of Europe: The content of CoE instruments on, e.g. minority rights or RMLs might receive, in the EU, a stronger acknowledgement and a better rate of implementation through EU legislation. It remains to be seen to which extent the EU will adequately refer to the CoE existing instruments and promote its ratification in and outside its sphere of competence (notably in the enlargement process, but also in its neighbourhood policy).

Eurolang: From the Council of Europe's view will the new Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) be able to help in cases of linguistic discrimination?

Council of Europe: The FRA can collect and analyse data on matters related to Fundamental Rights, it can also provide reports and advice on related matters, on its own initiative or on request by EU bodies, provided it is compatible with its programme of activities. The Regulation (setting up the FRA) mentions specifically the necessary co-operation with the CoE. To this end, a bilateral co-operation agreement should be signed (hopefully) by the end of the year. One can hope that this would be an opportunity to have CoE standards on Human Rights better promoted and better applied in our Member States.

EU information on the Lisbon Treaty

http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm

Charter of Fundamental Rights

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/comparl/libe/elsj/charter/default_en.htm

Council of Europe ECRML

Council of Europe FCNM

http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/minorities/

Editor's Note: A news release of February 14 on the Oui au Breton website (<http://ouiaubreton.com>) bears the title: "Treaty of Lisbon in effect since this morning in France: President Sarkozy ratified it." The article then goes on to point out that in France, applying the protection guaranteed to regional and minority languages and cultures is quite another matter.



Breton and Gallo Classes to be eliminated in 14 Middle Schools and High Schools of Brittany

This January the Rectorat of Rennes (the representative of the French Ministry of National Education for public schools in Brittany) announced that it wants to close down Breton and Gallo language classes in eight middle schools and five high schools of Brittany in the fall of 2008. Already rejecting requests for new classes, these closures make it even more difficult for public school students to continue learning Breton in schools near their home.

Not only will it be increasingly difficult to make a transition to higher levels of Breton classes, but last fall the Ministry of Education adopted a new program for regional languages in primary schools that enraged teachers and parents by imposing low standards for students who graduate from bilingual programs.

While the levels of competence set in this program may be realistic for learners of second languages (English, German, or Breton) who study that language at an introductory level with just a few hours per week, these levels are totally inappropriate for children completing a bilingual Breton/French program. After spending half of his/her school day in Breton, surely a child should be able to do better than “write simple and short notes,” “read short and very simple texts,” or “have a very brief exchange of ideas but in general not understand enough to pursue a conversation.”

While there is nothing to stop teachers in public school bilingual programs from expanding beyond these very low standards set by the Ministry of National Education, these standards will be used to guide teacher training and thus have the real danger of inadequately preparing teachers for more rigorous demands of bilingual programs. If this insultingly low level of competence will be applied to bilingual programs in the primary schools, it will be no surprise that a transition to middle school Breton classes where subjects like math or history are taught through the medium of Breton will be a challenge for students.

In designing programs for the inclusion of Breton in primary schools that set the stage for limited mastery of Breton, and in eliminating options for continuing study of Breton as a living language at the middle school and high school levels, the Ministry of National Education seems intent of undermining bilingual education in the public school system of Brittany.

A New Report on the “state of the Breton language” from Ofis ar Brezhoneg (www.ofis-bzh.org)

At the end of 2007 Ofis ar Brezhoneg produced a comprehensive report called “La langue bretonne à la croisée des chemins” covering the period of 2002-2007. This 136 page document (in Breton or French) is loaded with reliable statistics on the presence of Breton (and Gallo) in every area of life in Brittany and can be consulted on the Ofis ar Brezhoneg website in the “Observatoire” section. While the PDF file will take a while to download, it is well worth a look. Printed copies can also be purchased from Ofis ar Brezhoneg. The report includes basic statistics to show who speaks Breton and how it is being transmitted (or not) from one generation to the next. An analysis is made of political bodies and their support of regional languages - from UNESCO and European level institutions down to the local community. Other chapters look at specific areas to analyze the state of Breton in education, leisure time activities, publishing, medias, computer technology, and in economic and public life.

A concluding chapter also looks at various scenarios of action and what these would mean for the future of the Breton language. The prospect is not good if things continue on the same slow path now taken, but the Breton language is not doomed to extinction if action is taken quickly and effectively. This report gives the facts needed to target action and to measure changes. And it certainly shows how much has been accomplished in recent years – cause for celebration and hope.

We have reported frequently on the work of Ofis ar Brezhoneg in the pages of Bro Nevez and this organization continues to do strategic work to support the Breton language on a number of fronts. Its website provides regular updates on the work of towns and cities as they sign onto the “Ya d’ar Brezhoneg” campaign, as well as resources for those needing translations or other information. Looking for a Breton class? A 57-page PDF guide to Breton language classes of all kinds for adults will give you all the information you need: names and addresses of centers offering classes, contact names and numbers, e-mails, and sometimes a detailed description of what is offered. The guide is arranged by Departments and includes Paris and other cities of France where Breton classes can be found.

It’s not all bad news for the Breton language

While there are many obstacles to overcome, Bretons are clearly continuing to plan for the future of their language in creative ways. For Diwan’s 30th anniversary it has organized a scrabble tournament in Breton (among many other events). Planning is underway for

an engineering and business school in the Breton language to promote the better integration of Breton in the business environment. The presence of Breton on the internet continues to expand, and while the Breton language is not as audible as it should be on television or radio, the internet is serving as an alternative media for creative programming and as the means to make local radio and television stations more widely accessible. More and more adults are taking Breton lessons and work continues to develop more out-of school programs for children to use Breton as well as day care centers where Breton can be a medium for the tiniest children. And more and more towns and cities are signing on to the “Ya d’ar Brezhoneg” campaign under the direction of the Ofis ar Brezhoneg to make Breton more visible in public life.

A New Cultural Charter for Brittany in the Works

The growth of programs and clear expression of good will on the part of the Breton population for the continued development of its unique languages (Breton and Gallo) and culture has inspired the Cultural Council of Brittany (Kuzul Sevenadurel Breizh) to draft a new Cultural Charter for Brittany. While the Cultural Charter for Brittany enacted 30 years ago to fund and link the work of associations, towns and cities, the departments of Brittany (all five), the Region of Brittany, and the state was very effective, it is necessary to put together a new plan that reflects the changing landscape and needs of Brittany. Working with the Cultural Institute of Brittany, the Cultural Council is in the process of drafting this new Charter. And more information can be found on www.kuzul.info.

A Few Important Websites to Learn More

Information for the above notes was gleaned from the following websites. These are all very good places to find up-to-date information on what is happening in Brittany and Europe in relation to languages.

Agence Bretagne Presse:
www.agencebretagnepresse.com

Kuzul Sevenadurel Breizh (Cultural Council of Brittany) : www.kuzul.info

Eurolang: www.eurolang.net

European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages:
<http://www.eblul-france.eu>

Ofis ar Brezhoneg : www.ofis-bzh.org

Oui au Breton: <http://ouiaubreton.com>

Gal var Vretoned evid an Demokratezh/Collektiv Breton pour la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme :
www.collectifbreton.eu



New (and some not so new) Books from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Jean-Jacques Monnier. *Résistance et conscience bretonne 1940-1945 – L’hermine contre la croix gammée*. Yoran Embanner. 2007, 398 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-09-2.

A number of very good studies of Brittany during World War II and the German occupation have appeared in recent years. To best understand the complex history of France of this period it is necessary to read them all since each has a slightly different focus and no one book can tell the whole story. But here is a book that tells a story that has been for the most part hidden – that of the hundreds of Bretons who served in the Resistance movement yet who were outspoken militants for the Breton language and culture. And, in the post war years, many were also very active in working to build a strong Breton economy.

This is a book that is sorely needed in a period when journalists in Paris seem intent on reinforcing the stereotype that all Breton militants in the World War II period were Nazi collaborators. As the author points out this attempt to vilify the Breton movement – past and present – by linking it to Nazi sympathizers is the product of a French blindness that champions a highly centralized government and a nationalism where French only can be the “national” language. In the year 2000, over 20 years after his death, Roparz Hemon was attacked in the press for his presumed pro-Nazi position in World War II. All those recognizing the importance of the work of this scholar for the Breton language were automatically implicated as “collaborators” by the mere mention of his name in a positive light. In a more recent year a map was produced (and placed in school text books) that highlights Brittany, Corsica, Alsace, Savoy and the Basque and Catalonian regions of France as areas where strong identities can provoke separatism and sectarianism.

Jean-Jacques Monnier’s carefully researched study of Breton militants and their role in the Resistance shows clearly that Bretons’ pride in their identity and their actions to strengthen Breton society and culture (and the promotion of the Breton language especially) are not linked in any way to a pro-Nazi spirit. Indeed Breton militants have been a very diverse group with many

different (and changing) political leanings. In the pre-war period Bretons espoused pacifism, patriotism, anarchism, Bolshevism, socialism, fascism, communism, anti-colonialism, and anti-militarism, among other choices. And anti-Nazism was very clearly expressed in the writings of Breton militants in this period.

It was clear in the post World War I period that France would do nothing to recompense Brittany for the very heavy toll taken on Breton soldiers during that war. A feeling that there was nothing to hope for from France was coupled by some with the example of the Irish uprising where Irish rebels allied with Germany to gain independence from England. It was not so simple, but the Irish example coupled with hatred for France and its continued suppression of cultural freedom for Brittany led some to see the best/only hope for Brittany in collaboration with Germany. Others, just as familiar and impressed with the story of Irish independence did not see German occupation of Brittany in 1940 as an opportunity to gain freedom.

Just 60 to 70 Bretons joined German forces to fight on their side against France. An estimated .15% of the Breton population collaborated in some way during the war. While not all jumped into the Resistance movement, Bretons were active from the start. Half of De Gaulle's Free French Forces were Bretons, one-third of the French Forces of the Interior were Bretons, and Bretons were well represented in the Free French Naval Forces and other Resistance groups in all parts of France as well as overseas in Africa. Monnier's research shows that serving in the Resistance was in no way inconsistent with the expression of Breton identity and promotion of Breton culture, despite the reputation a small group of Breton nationalists had gained as Nazi sympathizers. Bretons in the Resistance movement did not shun the use of the Breton language and embraced the Breton national anthem, the "Bro gozh ma zadou," as a rallying song. The hermine was not absent from tanks or insignia.

Monnier's book draws on eight years of research and the consultation of a great deal of unpublished manuscripts and interviews. The approach of the book is to present a portrait of several hundred Bretons (some very briefly), using their words or others' writings and words about them to present their work in the Resistance and their work as militants for the Breton cause. A complicated picture emerges of people who are active in groups such as the Breton National Party (Parti National Breton / PNB) or the Bagadou Stourm youth groups with their paramilitary style who become active in the Resistance movement - passing along military plans and information to the Allies, helping get downed aviators across the channel to England, engaging in guerilla warfare, sabotaging German transportation routes, or hiding or doctoring wounded

Resistance fighters. These biographical portraits show others who are not active in the Breton movement before or during the war, but become very active supporters of the Breton language, culture and economic development in the immediate post-war period. Monnier gives a human face to all of these Breton militants which forces one to recognize the diversity of ways Bretons took pride in their Breton identity while fighting for the freedom of France and Brittany.

Monnier was born in London in 1944 to parents who traveled there to join the French Free Forces. This book is not a glorification or exaggeration of the importance of Bretons in the Resistance, nor does Monnier ignore the fact that Breton militants collaborated with Germany. The people presented in the book speak for themselves and there are more stories to be told. Mona Ozouf points out in her introduction to this book that it has the merit of presenting the complexity of Breton history and those who fought for the Breton language and culture. Ozouf, a well respected historian and director of research for the CNRS (Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques) is the daughter of Yann Sohier (1901-1935), founder of Ar Falz. This organization promoted the teaching of Breton in public schools and continues to do so today. Sohier was an ardent defender of the Breton language and looked to the Soviet Union as an example where minority languages and peoples were supported. His writings (and those of other Breton militants of the inter-war years) clearly expressed anti-fascist and anti-Nazi feelings, as well as anti-colonialist views and solidarity with oppressed peoples of the world – including those who were a victim of French imperialism.

This book is not an easy read and will be best appreciated if you have a basic knowledge of the history of this period and the history of the Breton movement. Monnier provides a bibliography of over 100 books and articles for those interested in reading more. A useful listing of initials for names of organizations and publications can be found, and the index to names cited in the book is essential. Sixteen pages of photos and documents are a welcome addition.

This book is an antidote to the ongoing unjustified vilification of Bretons - past and present - who have fought for the future of their language and culture.



Josette Jonas, Christian Le Corre, Christiane Jamet. *Ces Bretons d'Amérique du Nord.*

Editions Ouest France. 125 pages. 2005 (ISBN 2-7373-3605-8).

This is not a new book, nor does it pretend to be a complete history of Breton emigration to North America, but this is a great introduction to the subject – in its text and in a wealth of images.

Grégoire Le Clech (1909-1990), studied Breton emigration between 1880 and 1975 in detail and his work serves as a key resource for today's scholars. He estimated that 115,000 Bretons emigrated to the U.S. and Canada and Argentina during that period. Over 800,000 emigrated to Paris and other regions of France. This book presents just a few Bretons who came to North America from the time of early explorers like Jacques Cartier (from Saint Malo) in the late 16th century to the present. It is a continuing story and certainly a fascinating one.

In 125 pages you get a very personal view of individuals, and each chapter puts the travels of Bretons into a historical context – why they left Brittany, how they adapted to a sometimes very difficult and different new life, and why some returned to Brittany.

Chapter One describes the earliest Bretons to come to North America – some to explore, some to create missions, and some to settle. Mini-biographies give an idea of the diversity of adventures. You meet, for example, Guillaume Couillard of Saint Servan whose marriage in 1621 in Quebec is the first to be registered in the Notre-Dame parish of Quebec.

The second chapter takes us through the 18th century and the important role Bretons played in the American war for independence. We meet Armand Tuffin, Marquis de la Rouerie (Colonel Armand) who would serve with honor with George Washington. And you meet Bretons active in the history of Louisiana - for example Julien Poydras de Lalande, who became a successful plantation owner and influential politician.

The third chapter presents a few Bretons who marked North American history in the 19th century, including John James Audubon (1785-1851) who spend his childhood in Coëron near Nantes. While they did not settle in the U.S., Breton writers such as François René de Chateaubriand and Jules Verne were marked by their travels in the U.S.

In the fourth chapter the travel of Bretons to the 1849 gold rush in California is described – a trip by long sea travel around the Cape Horn or equally arduous travel across country. Some Bretons stopped off along the way, as in the case of Auguste Gilbert, a veteran of voyages to China and Africa, who spent time in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show which toured the U.S. and Europe from 1883 to 1916.

The next chapter describes economic forces in 19th century Brittany such as the death of the linen and weaving industry and the arrival of railroads that encouraged Breton emigration. In this chapter, too, you not only get a good overview of the period but also stories of individuals such as Nicolas Le Grand of Roudouallec who returned to Brittany after four years of hard labor as a lumberjack in Canada, farmer in Connecticut, metal worker in Pennsylvania, and railroad worker on the North Pacific line. He was the first of many to leave the area of Gourin to seek a fortune.

A chapter also focuses on the 1890s and Breton emigration to the western prairies of Canada where the creation of missions to convert Indians and establish new settlements is described. Names such as Gourin City testify to the presence then and now of Bretons.

A chapter is devoted to Lenox Dale, Massachusetts, where Bretons found jobs in the early 1900s in the country homes and clubs of wealthy businessmen (Westinghouse, Vanderbilt, Carnegie ...). This chapter continues the story of emigrants from central western Brittany and describes the support system set up for new arrivals as family members followed others across the Atlantic.

The more urban destination of Bretons in the 1890s and early 1900s is described in a chapter devoted to Milltown, New Jersey, where the Michelin factory brought hundreds of Bretons as well as French workers - some 200 Bretons among 2,000 workers. This chapter describes well the institutions and activities linked to this emigrant population - schools, hospitals, and social activities.

A chapter on World War I describes the return of emigrants called up by France to serve in the army, as well as the enlistment of Breton soldiers in both the American and Canadian forces. A good explanation of the post-war economic situation in France is used to explain why many emigrants returned again to the U.S. (and the Michelin plant) after the war to find work.

A chapter called "La Grande Traversée" looks at shipbuilding and enterprises put into place to assist emigrants in their trans-Atlantic travel. A section in this chapter describes well the process of Ellis Island and the social networks put into place to assist new arrivals who often spoke no English. The final two chapters look at more recent emigration in Canada and the U.S. and profile families and individuals who still live here. While Bretons have succeeded in a large number of different enterprises, a very interesting portrait is given of the restaurant business in Manhattan and how social and sporting clubs (Le Stade Breton, for example) were – and still are – used to help new immigrants find jobs and housing.

The text to this book is by Josette Jouas who was born in Gourin and raised in the U.S. She is a professor of English at ENST in Brest. In just a small number of pages she has distilled information to provide a historical context for particular periods and to introduce dozens of individuals to bring the story of Breton emigration to life.

Christian Le Corre is responsible for the incredibly rich illustrations of the book – hundreds of photos of people and places, and reproductions of paintings, postcards, book covers, maps and drawings that make the book even more interesting.

Christiane Jamet is listed as a contributor. She was also born in Gourin and spent forty years in the U.S. She was one of nine (out of ten) children in her family who emigrated to the U.S. and their story and work in California, Chicago/Wisconsin, and New York State is briefly told in the book's final chapter. Those in the Midwest may recognize the name Monique Jamet, a master chef who worked in Chicago and moved to Wisconsin. She wrote *Cooking with the Seasons* and did a TV cooking show. Christiane Jamet is today president of the association Bretagne-Transamerica which collects documents and stories of Breton emigrants and organizes conferences and exhibits each year in Gourin (www.gourin.com/bta/).

For its visual richness alone, this is a book well worth investigating to get an idea of the presence of Bretons throughout history on the North American continent.



Olivier Le Dour & Grégoire Clech. *Les Bretons dans la Rouée vers l'or de Californie*. Les Portes du Large. 2006. 576 pages. (ISBN 10 : 2-914612-20-6. ISBN 13 : 978-2-914612-20-3)

I remember vaguely learning about the Gold Rush and Sutter's Mill in school. And my images of miners come from cowboy movies – old men with beards dragging a scrawny stubborn donkey and panning for gold in a little stream. So this book is a welcome remedy to my ignorance of American history.

This book includes a wealth of portraits of Breton individuals and accounts of their experiences. Lacking diaries, letters, or first-hand accounts by Bretons themselves, the book draws on intensive research of administrative records, ship logs, newspaper obituaries, and accounts of all sorts. Over 1,000 Bretons who traveled to California are presented – embedded in the text of the book and in an alphabetical listing in the annex of over 100 pages. An estimated 13,500 French fortune-seekers came to California between 1849 and

1855, of which some 1,300 were Bretons. 700 (53%) of these were sailors, often deserters jumping ship with the lure of wealth. 250 (19%) were Bretons traveling from Brittany and 250 (19%) were Bretons who had emigrated to other places in France and then came to the U.S. 120 (9%) were Bretons already in the U.S. – especially Louisiana – who took advantage of this opportunity for “easy” wealth.

The 385 pages of the main text of the book opens in citing the first arrival of Breton ships on the west coast in the late 1700s – short stops to take on provisions on the way to China. While visits remained rare in the first half of the 19th century to the slowly developing coast of California, Breton voyagers left some important descriptions. In 1846 there were some 10,000 (non-Indian) people living in California. When Mexico ceded California to the U.S. in 1848 the treasure of gold to be found was yet to become known. By the end of 1849 some 130,000 new arrivals would come for gold – the “forty-niners.” Two-thirds of them would arrive by ship. Among those early arrivals would be John Woodhouse Audubon, son of John-James Audubon, who would meet with failure and return to New York greatly deceived.

The book provides a good context of history to explain Breton emigration to California and more generally, and in larger numbers, to other parts of North America. It describes how emigrants were organized, where they came from, and the routes they took (by land and sea). The biographical notes used in each chapter illustrate well the difficulty of travel, the dangers of the trip itself, and the atmosphere of San Francisco and other ports where ships arrived. The abandonment of ships whose captain and crew are captivated by the race for gold is carefully set in the context of the times and the commonness of losing sailors to an alluring port of call.

A chapter describes San Francisco - a city of tents and wooden houses hastily constructed, with devastating floods and fires, a constantly changing population, and uncertain commerce with constant scarcity of goods for the huge numbers who flooded through men made up 90% of emigrants coming for the Gold Rush, but by the mid 1850s women and children would arrive to join their husbands. With people arriving from all parts of the world, San Francisco was a city where hundreds of languages could be heard – besides Breton and French. From 450 inhabitants in 1847 when San Francisco was called Yerba Buena, the population grew to some 55,000 by 1856. Bretons and others who arrived in the 1850s did not always seek gold in the hills but could find jobs in a number of trades important to a fast-growing city, from banking to baking. This is also described in the biographical information included in this book.

The author follows Bretons to mining camps and a number of other settlements in California, describing the day-to-day life, techniques to mine for gold and the environmental impact this had on rivers.

While information about many Bretons who traveled to California can be scarce, for others the author has a more complete picture thanks to family documents. These more complete records allow one to follow the fate of the individuals and their families who return to Brittany or settle in California – sometimes leaving place names that note the passage of a particular person (Limantour Beach, for example) or of Bretons more generally (Saint-Malo Road). And for those who returned to Brittany – enriched or not – the nickname “California” or sometimes “America” was often attached to them or their land.

Annexes take up close to 200 pages of the 576-page book. As noted earlier, biographical notes on over 1,000 Bretons make up a big part of this, with several lists of ship crews as well. An annex also gives a list of French ships and their stops at various ports in California from 1800 through the gold rush period to 1857, listing the ship’s maker, owner, home port, captain and cargo.

A 44-verse *feuille volant* (broadsheet) on the gold rush is also included with the text in Breton and a French translation. Maps and statistic show the home origin of Breton emigrants and sailors traveling to California and a list notes some 170 books and articles consulted to prepare the book, as well as archives consulted. An important source of information for this book were the documents and studies done by Grégoire Le Clech (1909-1990) who did extensive research on Breton emigration, amassing a wealth of statistics and stories. These were so invaluable for the author Olivier Le Dour, that he chose to list Le Clech as a co-author of the book. Le Dour’s ancestor Joseph Daouphars helped launch emigration to America from the “mountains” of central western Brittany in 1881. His grandparent Yann Dour was born in Connecticut, so this is a topic of long personal interest to this Breton who works for the European Commission in Brussels.

This book is a true reference work for those interested in learning more about the Gold Rush and the role of Bretons as “forty-niners” and explorers and settlers of the American west.



A Note on the publisher Éditions Les Portes du Large

Like this book on the engagement of Bretons in the California Gold Rush, Portes du Large has published a number of books featuring Bretons and world travel.

And this is indeed the stated aim of this publishing house established in 2001 which features studies and biographical works about Bretons of the past and present who have traveled all over the world.

The following are just a few of the books available:

Jean-Loup Avril. *Mille Bretons – Dictionnaire Biographique*

This was first published in 2002 and then republished and enriched in 2003. In nearly 500 pages Bretons of the past and also of more contemporary times are presented with photos or drawings for over 800 of them. And there are some 2,000 references for those who want to learn more about the remarkable Bretons in this book. (Reviewed in Bro Nevez 90, May 2004)

Bernard Le Nail. *Noms de lieux bretons à travers le monde.*

This is a geographical dictionary with some 800 citations of places with a Breton link. This includes a number in the U.S. and Canada, but you will be surprised by the world span of Bretons who have left a mark in exploration or settlement. This was published in 2001. (Reviewed in Bro Nevez 81, February 2002)

Philippe Carrer. *La Bretagne dans la guerre d’indépendance américaine*

You have probably learned in history books that the French supported the American War of Independence, but did you know that among those labeled “French” were over 20,000 Bretons – especially active in naval battles. This 224-page book will definitely make you think about American independence in a new way.

Hervé Gourmelon. *Le Chevalier de Kerlérec, L’Affaire de la Louisiane.*

This book will also reveal how Breton the history of a French presence in American history has been. This detailed and thoroughly researched biography of the last “French” governor of Louisiana provides a wealth of information about the history of New Orleans and this frontier region of the country at the end of the 18th century. (reviewed in Bro Nevez 91, August 2004).

Marcel Fournier. *Les Bretons en Amérique Française 1504-2004.*

This very weighty book (in all senses of the word) is a mine of information on the Breton presence in North America (especially strong for Canada) from the 16th century to more recent times. (Reviewed in Bro Nevez 99, August 2006)

Other books:

Philippe Godard & Tugdual de Kerros. *Louis de Saint Aloüarn, Lieutenant des vaisseaux du Roy – Un Marin breton à la conquête des terres australes.* 2002.

André Saiiles. *Un Mandarin breton au service du roi de Cochinchine – Jean Baptiste Chaigneau et sa famille*. 2006.

Daniel Raphalen. *L'Odysée de Port-Breton ou le rêve océanien du Marquis de Rays*. 2006.

Jean-Yves Mérian (director), *Les Aventures de Bretons au Brésil à l'Époque coloniale*. 2007.

Jacques Charpy. *Dakar, naissance d'une métropole*. 2007.

These are just a few of the books in print and there are some interesting topics to come in 2008 (Bretons in Russia and Russians in Brittany, and Breton Huguenots in North America).

The 30-page catalog for Portes du Large which describes each book is in itself a rich although very brief introduction to Breton exploration of the world. I would be happy to provide anyone interested with a copy, or you could contact the publisher directly for more information:

Editions les Portes du large
9 rue Charles Duclos
35000 Rennes



And a Note on the Publisher Yoran Embanner

This is also a new publishing house in Brittany which has a few specialties of its own - In particular a popular and ever-growing series of small pocket dictionaries. The "Liligast" collection consists of tiny books (2 ½ x 1 ¾ inches) mini-dictionaries to take you from Breton to a number of European languages: Breton/Welsh, Breton/German, Breton/Spanish, Breton/French, Breton English, Breton/Italian, Breton/Dutch and Breton/Portuguese. But dictionaries have also been published for Cornish/English, Corsican/French or Italian, Ladin/German or Italian, Occitan/French, Romansh/German, French, English or Italian, and Savoyard/French. A slightly larger series for pocket dictionaries helps French speakers not only with Breton, but also with Croatian, Finnish, Hungarian, Lithuanian and Romanian, and both English and French speakers can use dictionaries for Corsican.

Yoran Embanner has also published a number of books on the Breton movement such as Monnier's book on the Resistance movement reviewed above. Others in this line include:

Kristian Hamon, *Le Bezen Perrot and Les nationalistes Bretons sous l'occupation*

Lionel Henry, *Le retour du mouvement breton après 1945*

Lionel Henry and Annick Lagadec, *FLB-ARB – L'histoire 1966-2005* (reviewed in Bro Nevez 98, May 2006)

Michel Tregulier's translation of Roparz Hemon's *Un Breton redécouvrant la Bretagne* (reviewed in Bro Nevez 98, May 2006)

History is also a strong theme for Yoran Embanner, and books on the history of Brittany and other Celtic countries includes the English language *History of Brittany* by Jean-Pierre Le Mat (reviewed in Bro Nevez 99, August 2006).

While the "bande dessinée" books so beloved in France and Brittany (and read by children as well as adults) have not developed quite the same audience in the U.S., Yoran Embanner has stepped into the publication of books in this more humorous vein with two Breton language translations by Alan Monfort of the Gaston Lagaffe series.

There are many other books in the Yoran Embanner catalog and I will be reviewing a few in future issues of Bro Nevez. I would be happy to share a copy of this catalog with anyone interested. Or, contact the publisher directly:

Yoran Embanner
71 Hent Mespiollet
29170 Fouesmant
Yoran.embanner@gmail.com



KENTEL 10 / LESSON 10

A Breton lesson prepared by Natalie Novik

GERIADURIG / VOCABULARY

Brittany is predominantly Catholic, albeit with its own brand of Catholicism and its own saints which are not found in the French calendar, but are often the same as in Wales or other parts of the British Isles and Ireland, where they came from to convert Brittany to Christianity around the 7th century. To this day, Brittany keeps numerous holidays that are specific not only to the region, but sometimes to a particular village or even a particular location. They are called "pardon", and take the form of a pilgrimage followed by a common meal and sometimes a fair. They can be

dedicated to the Virgin Mary (ar Werhez), or her mother, Anna, as in the two very important pardons of Santez Anna an Alre in southern Brittany and Santez Anna ar Palud in Western Brittany, both celebrated on July 26th. Other pardons honor a variety of saints, perhaps the most famous being Erwan (St Yves), the patron saint of Brittany celebrated on May 17th, Gouel Sant Erwan. People will congregate to these pardons in the hundreds and sometimes in the thousands. In the fall, a very popular pardon is at Menez Mikael ar Mor (Mount St. Michael, or rather in Breton St. Michael of the Sea) on September 29th. If they cannot attend, their relatives and friends will bring back "lod euz ar pardon", small trinkets and candy from the pardon. Pardons are a great way to get to know a very intimate aspect of Brittany, and if you stay for the common meal, to get easily acquainted with people.

Gouel Holiday (in the sense of a particularly holy day, not a vacation)

Nedeleg Nedeleg laouen!	Christmas Merry Christmas
Bloavez nevez Bloavez nevez mad!	New Year Happy New Year
Pask	Easter
Iliz	church
Tour	tower

<http://www.aboutbrittany.com/> will give you some information in English. More information is available in French at:

http://www.bretagne.com/fr/patrimoine/saints_procisions



DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL 17 – TOSSED ABOUT IN UNIVERSAL CYCLES

Jean Pierre Le Mat

From where do the ideas that roll into the Breton skulls come? Okay, I know that a Celtic brain is nurtured by the ocean winds, dreams of freedom and a changing climate. But is our spirit a kind of single-malt whisky? Is it made up from a single type of grain and maturing in a single place? Is it like the Pomerol, a Bordeaux wine made only of Merlot grapes?

Two Breton ghosts rose in front of me, to answer my distressing question. How did they manage to come

here? I haven't the slightest idea. But I can certify that they rose here. They sat close to one another, each one on a stone of a ruined wall which sheltered them from the night wind. The daylight had not yet reached the village of Insane-Thought, in the forest of Broceliande, not far from Merlin's fountain. The birds were still silent; only from time to time was there an owl crying over the trees.

Yves lived during the XIIIth century. At this time, in Landreger, on the north coast of Brittany, people whispered that he was on the way to saintliness. For a bishop, that is a very gratifying promotion. For the lawyer he was, that is a kind of wonder. To forge the measures of justice and a bottomless charity is a mystery and a miracle. Yves was a strange guy anyway. He liked to debate with his human brothers. But, when he was a young priest among the rude fishermen of Tredrez, he enjoyed lonely walks in wild nature. During his days in the dark cathedral of Landreger, the visions of Heaven mixed with the smell of spring on Beg-Ar-Forn cliffs.

The presence of Eudo de Stella, known as "Eon of the Star" in Brittany, surprised me. He spent many years here, during the twelfth century. But he, as Yves, was dead for centuries. I could not imagine that Destiny allowed his ghost to come back. The judgment of the Pope, the refutations of the most clever theologians, the sermons of the missionaries of the Holy See were used to swap his heresy. His disciples never bent, and so were killed. The memory of the Eon's teachings were covered with a reputation of madness. The monastery of Broceliande, where so many enthusiastic pilgrims came, was destroyed and renamed Insane-Thought.

Sure, there must have been a strange design of divine Providence to allow me to meet these ancient characters. But they didn't care about me, poor living Breton, and talked only one to the other.

- Lord allowed me to meet you, began Yves. The Landreger people called me Yves, but my true name is Ezwon, although I can also be called Yvon, Erwan, Eozenn, or Youenn. We have, you and me, the same name. This common burden binds us. It pushes me towards you. Who are you, my heretic homonym, my obscure brother?

- What could I add to what you said? answered Eon. The Council of Reims considered me as insane. I was described as a coarse character. Did you not read the reports and the conclusions of my trial?

- Oh Yes, of course! I read them and read again. I am a lawyer, a barrister. I know that, when a crime is

unforgivable, it is better to consider that the defendant is insane. In madness justifications are avoided, and that is a relief for everybody. Eon, did you commit an unforgivable crime?

- You are a subtle spirit, retorted Eon, and he screwed up his eyes. Then tell me why you read and read again the reports of my trial?

- Because I know the influence you had on the crowds, from Brittany and Normandy to Gascony. The threat was not insignificant for the Holy Church. I want to know the secret of this influence. Studying your trial, I hoped to unravel your enigma. In the madness game, I was looking for the obscure passion.

- Yes, Ezwon, you are correct... I was fascinated by the words that the priest utters during the mass: "Per Eum qui venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos". The Roman Church translates these words in this way: "Through the One who will come and judge the living and the dead". The true meaning of this sentence is: "Through Eon who will come and judge the living and the dead".

- The good prelates burst out laughing, and I can understand them! Eon, how did you dare to imagine such a thing? Could you replace the Supreme Judge?

- Ah, my brother lawyer, you saint of the courts! You judged the living ones, didn't you? To judge the dead ones is another business, but many people do so. Do you not believe that your faithful flock can hear: "Per Ivom qui venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos"? Ezwon, you look like these good prelates, full of Roman influence. You are a Latin scholar, but a poor expert in Greek language. However, the holy prayers and books are full of Greek words. The name of Christ, of Ecclesia, or the incantation of Kyrie Eleison are formulas charged with a frightening power. And the wise translators would rather let them in Greek. It is the same for Eon.

- What do you mean ?

- Eon is a proper name: It is mine and yours. But it is also a common name, aeon, αιων in Greek. Latin translators did not know how to manage it. Sometimes they translated it by saeculum, "century", which means nothing.

For those who believe in one time, one God, one life, one universe, "aeon" can be translated by "eternity". For the others, who admit a greater diversity, it can mean "era", "generation", "cycle". And the void formula "by centuries of centuries" can be better replaced by "eternity", or then by "cycle of cycles". And the sentence appears full of meaning then...

Yves remained thoughtful. The aeons were not unknown to him. He met them in the writings of Irenaeus about the Gnostics. Clement of Alexandria and Origen also wrote about these heretics. The most successful Gnostic theologian was Valentinus, an Egyptian who taught in Alexandria during the second century. Valentinus taught that the world was built through successive pairs of aeons, until the final chaos and the coming of Christ. What link could exist between this remote heresy, and the evil monk of Broceliande?

Yves asked abruptly :

- Were you a far disciple of Valentinus the Gnostic? It would be extraordinary... I cannot imagine how such a heresy came from Egypt to Brittany.

- The Church transmits the heresies through its refutations, answered Eon. Thus, the thoughts of Valentinus were not foreign to me. I was an Augustinian monk, and Augustine was a Gnostic in his youth. The teachings of Valentinus excited my brain. Just as you came to meet me, I went to Valentinus...

Under the reign of emperor Antonine, Rome is a cosmopolitan city. And, as usual, the most spirited people turned towards those who were challenging the established order, the too well established order. At this time, Antonine built a wall to prevent the Scots from invading the empire. He strengthened the border of the Rhine against the Germanic incursions. It is also the time when the Annals, the great History that Tacitus had written twenty years earlier, began to be known. Rome was discovering the fascinating men of the North, who defeated Varus not far from the sanctuary of Extersteine. Who were these people, and which were their gods? There were Germans in Rome. The empire leaned on these foreign mercenaries, as an old man leans on a young man. Valentinus was wandering in the city. He was a mystic, drunk of God, a man like you and me, Ezwon. He seeks his way and probably crossed the way of Nordic believers....



The Germanic religion tells that at the beginning was a pair, the frozen North and the South of fire. At the junction was generated the race of the giants. A couple was formed, combining a giantess and the son of Bûri, a new being. They generated the gods. The gods were divided into two tribes, Ases and Wanés. The gods built the world and created humanity.

The gods are not the first beings to appear. They are the third wave, like Verb and Life was the third aeon in

Valentinus teachings. And the Humans appear with the fourth cycle. In the German paganism and Valentinus heresy, there is a final chaos. The humanity will terminate, and also the old cycles. A new world is made possible by Jesus in the Gnostic heresy, by Baldur, son of Odin, in the Germanic tradition.

- Maybe, maybe... Valentinus could have been influenced by the Germanic beliefs. But what about yourself?

- I am not a disciple of Valentinus, Ezwon. I am Valentinus. Well, a coarse Valentinus, to some extent...

- Do you mean that Valentinus is a wrong track? Were you, Eon, influenced directly by the Germans?

- Ezwon, what was said by the chroniclers is true. Alberic, legate of the Holy See, and Hugues, archbishop of Rouen, preached against me in Nantes, facing crowds of heretics. Why Nantes?

- Yes, why Nantes?

- The Vikings settled firmly in Nantes two centuries before I came. Their old beliefs survived there, mixed with the old Celtic ones. When Alan Barvek, the duke of Brittany, defeated them, he established feudalism. The lords stood far from the people of Brittany, and the clerks were cruel masters.

- Thus, Eon, you preached the return to the pagan beliefs?

- Oh, Yves, could I do that? These beliefs had already turned into legends and superstitions. But the old truths gave me eloquence, authority and courage. I enjoyed them in my heart. My words awoke old dreams for the men I visited, these poor people reduced to serfdom since the return of lords and clerks. I have been accused of propagating the watchword "Everything to everybody" ; Actually, it was the people of the ocean who gave this word to me.

- Oh, Eon. I understand now that crowds joined you. Behind you, the last Celtic warriors and the last Vikings rose once again, in a world which was not theirs any longer. The old truths had died. You came too late, Eon of the Star... Yes, you were called "of the Star"... What does that mean?

- I will give you an explanation. It is probably false, but it is the one which will fit the best to your brain. Listen. My hour of glory came 2500 years after Akhenaton, the heretic Pharaoh... 2500 years! A very significant interval of time... At the time of Akhenaton, several religions

coexisted in Egypt. The city of On, opposite Memphis, on the other side of the Nile, was the city which worshipped Atoum, the Sun-Creator. Atoum generated four divine couples. The first was composed of Chou, the air, and of Tefnout, humidity. The second associated Geb, the Earth and Nout, the Sky. The third was the divine couple Osiris and Isis. The fourth was Seth and Nephtys.

When the Pharaoh Amenophis IV imposed his religious reform and took the name of Akhenaton, it was more a change in Atoum religion than an heresy against the Memphis god Amon. References to any other god than Aton was proscribed. The statues of Amon were hammered and destroyed. But it was also prohibited to worship the divine children of Atoum, Isis, Osiris or Seth. Ezwon, imagine that... Akhenaton is my double and my opposite. He was shining. I was obscure, I sought the half-light of the forests. He passed from polytheism to strict monotheism; I followed the opposite way. He was called Akhenaton, which means emanation of the sun. I was called Eon of the Star...



- Eon of the Star... Tell me; What is this star, which would be the double and opposite of the sun?

- It could be a comet. It could also be a star that you do not see, Ezwon, and which however exists... A small star, which is now black and cold, but which was formerly the twin brother of the sun. This star, the Germanic traditions suspected it... That is why Odin is blind in one eye and... Hola!... Ho!... Ezwon! Do you dream? I see, you don't listen any longer...

- Yes?... Oh! Eon... What happens? I imagined a cycle beginning in Egypt and another beginning in Brittany. I imagined an immense, larger inversion than between you and Akhenaton, a cycle of cycles. Akhenaton is the beginning of a very long history, the story of monotheism. One century after his death, the Hebrews left Egypt, where they had been reduced to slavery by the successors of the heretic pharaoh. Their leader was named Moses, which mean the "son" in Egyptian language. Was he the son of Aton? Was he the last priest of the single god?... If Akhenaton is the beginning of a cycle, who are you, Eon, the Breton heretic? Moses rode his people towards the east, where they found their Promised Land. Will your heirs lead people towards the West, to an unknown continent? Several centuries later, will a Messiah be born there, a Messiah who will be the double and the opposite of Christ? Ah, Eon of the Star, God allowed me to satisfy my curiosity. But He did not offer me rest

New Music from Brittany

Nolwenn Korbell & Soïg Siberil. "Red." Coop Breizh CD DVD 1004. 2007

Reviewed by Natalie Novik

Just as I was about to leave from Brittany, I got a thick envelope in the mail. Surprise! Nolwenn Korbell had just sent me her latest CD, something I was contemplating getting over there... This one is very interesting and very rich too, because, besides the CD itself, it also includes a DVD with the concert given at the Cornwall Festival 2007 (Festival de Cornouailles 2007) in Quimper, and a booklet with the words to the songs (in Breton and French only, except for one in English).

The CD - She is accompanied on this CD by guitarist Soïg Siberil, whom I don't think I need to introduce to the readers of Bro Nevez. Just in case you just landed from Mars, Soïg is one the greatest guitarists in Brittany: he founded the group "Kornog", then "Den", played with "Gwerz" and many famous Celtic musicians. His subtle play matches extraordinarily Nolwenn's voice. She also plays the guitar, but her part is simpler, staying away from the effects achieved by Soïg.

The title "Red" does not mean red, as you would think from the color of the CD (or maybe it's a play on words by Nolwenn, I will have to check), but in Breton it means "it's necessary," or "one must." The 14 songs are mostly in Breton, and mostly composed by Nolwenn. One of them is in English: Pete Seeger's "Turn, turn, turn" and the last one has an English title "News from town for my love who stayed home."

The first song is entitled "Bugale Breizh." "The Children of Brittany," which is the name of a trawler which sank under unexplained circumstances in January 2004, not far from where a naval exercise with submarines was to take place the next day. Nolwenn sees a parallel between the five sailors who drowned and her people, the Bretons, also sinking to the bottom, helpless. The chorus says "ma mamm 'zo klañv, va bro 'zo klañv" (my mother is sick, my

country is sick), and I have not been able to get it out of my head for the past two days.

My other favorite is "Yannig ha Mai", (John and Mary), two kids who used to go shepherding together when they were young, which explains the chorus "Olole," a call used by shepherds in the fields to signal each other. But Yannig cannot be called back, he has developed other interests, and Mai has only her dreams left.

The melodies are very musical, most of the time quite melancholy, and well-suited for Nolwenn's voice, which, as I mentioned before, has gained a slightly lower registry, but reaches high notes with grace. Some of the songs are half spoken, half sung, others are calling for her deep emotions. What is characteristic of Nolwenn, for all of you Breton learners out there, is that she has a perfect diction in Breton. Every single word is understandable, and she writes the songs that way: simple words, airy sentences, and also very colloquial expressions. It's a pleasure to listen to her in Breton, she does it with so much ease.

The DVD - The DVD was filmed during a performance by Nolwenn and Soïg in Quimper at the Festival de Cornouailles 2007. It includes some of the songs like "Yannig ha Mai", but also some backstage time and work in the studio, with interviews of Nolwenn (in Breton with French subtitles), Soïg and the sound engineer.

On stage, Nolwenn Korbell also sings a song in Welsh, "Y Byd Newydd" (she spent 10 years in Wales, learned English and Welsh), and explains her interest for Wales. She ends up the DVD with a sea shanty "Courage, courage, beau marinier" (Courage, courage, handsome sailor) with the audience helping with the chorus in French. Off-stage, she gives two short interviews where she explains the need ("Red") she feels to sing in Breton as a way to get the younger generations interested.

Soïg Siberil's short interview focuses on the early influences on his life: Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez. That's how he and Nolwenn included "Turn, turn, turn" on the record. His

brother was a guitar player and helped me discover all these so-called protest songs. It was a very important step in his life, and not only from the musical point of view.

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Nantes-Histoire. *Révoltes, résistances et Révolution en Bretagne*. Nantes-Histoire. 2007. 70'28.

There is certainly no lack of song texts one could choose to compile a CD on the topic of revolts, resistance and revolution in Brittany. This CD produced by the organization Nantes-Histoire is a gem in terms of the wealth of information in its 92-pages of notes as well as the high quality and varied interpretations of the songs selected. This was a team effort with historians providing a context to understand the songs, and singers and musicians bringing the songs to life. Bravo to Sylvain Girault for his artistic coordination of the CD recordings.

Eight of the recordings on the CD are from previous recordings - and the little scratchy sounds on the selections by Gweltaz ar Fur and Evgen Kirjuhel from the early 1970s will be familiar to those whose technology has included the 45 rpm and Lp records. Performances by Dibenn, Erik Marchand (with Hameed Khan and Thierry Robin), Tri Yann, Storlok and Ifig Troadeg are from recordings ranging from the late 70s to more recent years.

The eleven new selections on this CD add some of Brittany's best voices with half of the texts in Breton and half in French. Breton language texts are interpreted by Annie Ebrel (with the group Dibenn), Loeiz le Bras, Sofi le Hunsec, Erik Marchand, Thierry Rouaud, Ifig Troadeg, Marthe Vassallo, Mona Jaouen (with Storlok), and Gweltaz ar Fur. For French texts you have Barberine Blaise, Roland Brou, Patrick Couton, Sylvain Girault, Mathieu Hamon, Evgen Kirjuhel and Tri Yann. The CD notes provide a brief but excellent introduction to each of the performers.

In a majority of cases voices are solo and unaccompanied so that the text is center-stage. In some cases you will hear guitar or other plucked

instruments, and Hameed Khan and Thierry Robin add an exotic flavor with tabla and oud to Erik Marchand's voice. Philippe Ollivier adds an interesting accordion accompaniment to a song performed by Marthe Vassallo. In all cases the voices and instrumental arrangements are well suited to the spirit of a text - whether quiet and reflective or stridently militant. Often the singers are performing texts that are from or about people and places of their home area of Brittany, and that cannot but add to the emotional investment made in performances.

If you were to simply listen to these songs and music you would have an enjoyable time, but you would miss 90% of their message. While some song texts tell a tale most do not cite any dates or provide a clear account of events. There is much to be read "between the lines." And that is provided very nicely by notes accompanying the song texts (all the Breton texts have French translations). In just a few pages a historical context is provided for each song which is key in getting an understanding of the songs and why they endured in popular tradition. These meaty texts are written by historians who make this CD as much a history book to be read as a CD to be heard: Gwenaël Guillaume, Dominique Le Page, Alain Bergerat, Michel Kervarec, Samuel Guicheteau, Jean-Michel Gravouil, Jean Guiffan, Baladine Claus and Alain Croix who also provides the introduction.

A long span of history is covered in these songs - from the opening song which evokes a peasant revolt of 1008 to the closing song which describes the uprising by the village of Plogoff against the imposition of a nuclear power plant in 1979. Peasant revolts against taxes are evoked in both "Ar falc'hon," a gwerz from the 15th century, and "Ar paper timbr" about the revolt of the Bonnet Rouges (Red Hats) in 1675 against taxes to fund France's war with Holland. Taxes are also the issue in "Maifestadeg merc'hed e Pondi" about the revolt of women in Pontivy against the town's taxing of rural peasants in the 19th century.

The French Revolution is the theme for "La journée du 19 juin 1793" which evokes the defense of the city of Nantes by Republicans ("Vive la République")

from the attack of insurgents from the Vendée ("Vive le Roi"). This is set to the music of "La Marseillaise" which would only later be adopted as France's national anthem. This melody is also used for "Allons enfants de l'Armorique" which evokes the spirit of the Revolution in 1820 when Breton students and city bourgeoisie revolt against an aristocracy taking on privileges during the French Restoration. The cause of the Chouans and counter-Revolutionary warfare in the Morbihan is the subject of the song "Marù Jean Jan ha Lavinci" about the death of Chouan leader Jean Jan.

Peasant revolt is the topic in an odd sort of way in the song "Planedenn," a text by poet Yann-Ber Piriou about the despair of rural Bretons. This song is about a woman whose husband dies in World War I and whose children all emigrate to find work in Paris. She is a victim to the poverty in rural Brittany that might explain why peasants did not organize many revolts in the 19th to mid-20th century.

A number of songs are about workers' movements and strikes. "Le Sauveur" written in 1910 evokes hatred for Aristide Briand (1862-1932) who vigorously suppressed workers' strikes for the French government. The ironic style of the text is carried into the music used for this text - a very familiar Christmas carol. "Tout va très bien" also has a satirical twist in its celebration of ship-builder's victory in a strike in 1930 in Saint-Nazaire. Moving to more recent years, another victory for workers is evoked in the 1968 song "La grève à Sud-Aviation" where strikers fought against a decrease in working hours and salaries. A text written in the early 1970s by farm workers in the Redon area and set to music by Kirjuhel, "Paysans en lutte, debout" was used in a number of other protest rallies by farmers and workers who would later join forces.

"The Internationale" is one of the world's most widely known songs - adopted by communists and socialists alike as their anthem. It was written first in French in 1870 by Eugène Pottier, and one of its earliest translations was in Breton in 1885 by Charles Roland. Roland enhanced the words to express his anti-clerical and socialist spirit. The song "Son ar vot" is also a call for the little guys to stand

up to the privileged and conservative clergy and nobility. This is a song urging voters to select the "red" ticket instead of the "white" ticket in the municipal elections of Poullaouen in 1929.

Other songs on this CD speak to very different themes. "Maleuriou ar vro" is a memorial to seven Breton Resistance fighters who were executed by the Germans in 1944. "Kemperle-Médréac" composed by Evgen Kirjuhel in 1971 was inspired by two controversial cases of teachers who were dismissed from their jobs because of "immorality" - a song to protest the imposition of conservative standards of "morality" that have nothing to do with teaching skills. The song "Son ar Bonedoù Ruz" by Gweltaz ar Fur is presented in the CD notes as a rallying call for a resurgence in Breton pride in the 1970s rather than a song about the "Red Hats" tax revolt of the 17th century.

The two closing songs are on events which inspired many other song texts as well. Tri Yann's "Le Soleil est noir" effectively captures the anger of the Breton population following the 1978 Amoco Cadiz oil tanker spill. It does not describe the fight of Breton mayors to get reparation from the Amoco oil company, but this is surely a great story of the little guy going up against the giant. "Keleier Plogo" composed by Denez Abernot in 1979 describes the defiance of the people of the town of Plogoff in fighting off the imposition of a nuclear power plant. Another case of the little guy (Plogoff and Brittany) defeating the giant (France).

There are certainly many other songs that could have been chosen for such a compilation and the 1960s and 70s alone provide a wealth of songs on resistance and revolt, if not revolution. This recording is definitely on my list of favorites for the lessons in Breton history and the way they are very beautifully brought to life in the performances on this CD.

♩

Patrick Ewen, Gérard Delahaye, Melaine Favennec. Tri Men. Dylie Productions DY 270. 2007. 51'10.

www.myspace.com/ewendelahayefavennec

"Tri Men" (three rocks in Breton) is a trio of singers - Patrick Ewen, Gérard Delahaye and Melaine Favennec - who have gotten together in recent years after successful musical careers of their own. This CD celebrates this and the prospect of continued collaboration for creative music and song. The CD opens with a song by Melaine Favennec, "Salut vieux frère" which is a lovely hymn to long friendships. "Les belles années 70" by Delahaye is also an autobiographical reflection on travels the three have had together (since the 70s to the present). "Sur le port de Concarneau" is a humorous running account with a mix of maritime song choruses and "yarns" about traveling through the Arrée Mountains of Brittany in the coldest of winters, 1973, in a 2CV to arrive for a gig in a warm pub in Concarneau. And "Logonna" also evokes a trip across Brittany for a concert. This is fun rock song with funky harmonica about these three "wild" musicians with graying hair.

The music and texts of the songs on the CD are mostly composed by Delahaye and Favennec with one text by Patrick Ewen. The musical styles are varied with a strong American folk style that is not at all outdated. Two songs are set to traditional Irish tunes. All three of these men have what one can only describe as pleasant and melodious voices in the best sense of those terms, and they often use harmony to great advantage. All three are equally skilled instrumentalists on fiddle, guitars (which are the dominant instrument here), banjo, mandolin and harmonica.

In hearing the music to these songs one will not immediately think "Breton," but these songs are both about Brittany and reflective of the international perspective of Breton singers. Some are simply fun - "Sous l'Hangar" about the yearly transformation of a big dilapidated farm shed harboring tools and an old tractor into the site for a fest noz. "Sonneurs" is about the role of Breton musicians in the celebration of all of life's joys. And the "bonus song" at the end of the CD, "Ballazeux," is about pollution solutions using shoes and bicycles.

Other songs evoke a more serious side to life - "La prison de Pontazen" is about a young man who robs a convenience store and ends up in prison, just as his

unloving parents predicted. "À la guerre, à la guerre" is about man's perpetual need to make war on others. "A Lampedusa" is about emigrants from Mali pursuing dreams in a strange city in Sicily, far from their desert home. I wasn't quite able to figure out if the song "Faut qu'il aille" about a baby/child/man's insatiable need to climb was in fun or a tragic account of a fall from a high steeple (I'll have to work on my French).

Twelve of the fourteen songs on this CD are composed by the "tri men" and are in French. The two exceptions are marked by the talents of these singers for innovative arrangements. "Identity," by Youenn Gwernig, is sung in English - the language in which, with Breton, Gwernig composed it. There is something a bit off beat in the match of English syllables with the beat of this music composed by Gwenola Gwernig which gives it a bluesy swing. It's a nice tribute to hear Youenn's voice reciting this poem in Breton in this arrangement. "Spered an tan" (the spirit of the fire) is a poem by Per Jakez Hélias set to music by Polig Monjarret. Sung in Breton, this text reflects on the nature of fire burning and dying out in a fireplace.

This is a CD full of joy and reflection and good music.

HEARD OF, BUT NOT HEARD

The short descriptions of the CDs below are drawn from information found in reviews and notes in the following Breton magazines: *Ar Men* 161 (Nov.-Dec. 2007) and 162 (Jan.-Feb. 2008), *Armor* 455 (De. 2007) and 456 (Jan. 2008), *Musique Bretonne* 205 (Nov.-Dec. 2007) and 206 (Jan.-Feb. 2008), and the *Le Télégramme* newspaper supplement "Grand Prix du Disque 2007"

Philippe Arduen. Mon pigeon voyageur. ARDU 0707, GCBPV

This is a collection of nineteen poems by Arduen set to music and produced by the Groupement Culturel des Pays de Vilaine. This organization is best known for recordings of traditional music of Gallo Brittany, so this is a new direction. The performance of poems engages two performers from *A Fleur des Mots* (Gwen de Coëtlogon and Bernard Saint-Cast) as well as five singers (including Jean-

Luc Roudaut and Ffran May) and nine musicians (including Ronan Robert, Zil and Jakez Lessouëf).

Badume's Band. Addis Kan. Innacor INNA 2075. Innacor records, created by Erik Marchand, Jacky Molard and Bertrand Ducor, focuses on world traditions and those of Brittany. In ten cuts and a 9-minute video this CD explores traditions of Ethiopia and Brittany, with accents of rock and jazz. The band includes Eric Menneteau (song), Rudy Blas (guitar), Etienne Callac (bass), Franck Le Masle (electric organ), Pierre-Yves Mével (tenor sax and flute), Antonin Volson (drum set) and Jonathan Volson (percussion).

Bagad Lann-Bihoué. 55 ans. B.A.N. Lann-Bihoué. Label Productions CD 1002. Because of its strong public presence during 55 years, this bagad of the French Navy is the best know of all of Brittany's bagadoù (which add bombarde to a Scottish style pipe and drum band). Now that the French military has moved from conscription to voluntary enlistment, (including women), this bagad includes pipers, bombarde players and percussionists form a number of bagads of Brittany who want to make music a full-time profession. This is in fact the only "professional" bagad in existence. The repertoire mirrors that of other bagads with a mix of airs and dance tunes, and performances geared to concerts rather than military parades. The CD comes in a round package with a red pompom on top - imitating the famous hats worn by the Bagad Lann-Bihoué.

Bagad Men ha Tan, Doudou N'Diaye Rose, Jr., and Cercle Celtique Giz'Kalon. Transe en Danses. DVD l'Oz Proudction L'OZ DVD4. This is a DVD of a performance at the 2006 Lorient Inter-Celtic Festival, Transe en Danses, bringing together the innovative Bagad Men ha Tan (with dominant use also of accordions, baritone sax and electric guitar), the Breton dance ensemble Cercle Giz'Kalon and Doudou N'Diaye Rose, jr. (whose father is world known), with an ensemble of Senegalese percussion. This is certainly not the first "Breizh-Africa connection" but an interesting one with the combination of the beat of Senegal with the Breton rhythm of Breton dances for plinn, an dro and gavotte.

Michel Chauvin & Frédérique Lory. An dianav a rog ac'hanoun / L'inconnu me dévore. DVD West médias / Dihunerien / Orphée Théâtre. This is an homage to writer Xavier Grall in an "operatic" style. A small chamber orchestra is joined by pianist Frédérique Lory and one also hears uilleann pipes. Poet Yvon Le Men recites Grall's "Solo" which is sung in Breton by

Marthe Vassallo, and a small choir does recitation and song to bring life to Grall's fiery writing. A highly innovative work showing that Breton music comes in all styles.

Jean Cras. Musique vocale. Timpani 1C1120. This CD features eight short pieces for choir, voice and organ : "Hymne en l'honneur d'une sainte," "Panis angelicus," "Ave verum, Regina coeli," "Dans la montagne," "Ave Maria," "Marche nuptiale" (composed for his own wedding), and "Messe à quatre voix a cappella." These are performed by soprano Sophie Marin-Degot, the ensemble Le Madrigal de Paris, with organists Pierre Farago and Vincent Rigot - all directed by Pierre Calmelet. Cras was an admiral in the French Navy as well as a composer and this CD shows the influence of his Catholic faith on his music.

Dastum Bro-Dreger. Alanig kof ruz - Imitations, chants et autres paroles d'oiseaux. Encyclopédie sonore du Trégor Vol. 9. EST 09. (www.dastum.net) This CD has 23 selections of bird song imitations, sayings and short humorous stories collected by Daniel Giraudon in the countryside of Tregor. This is part of a series of excellently documented CDs focusing on oral traditions and the spoken word produced by Dastum Bro-Dreger.

Faro. Faro. CD Production Anna Crouse & Cie. This is the first recording by the fest noz band Faro. The group is composed of five musicians to which is added trio of brass. Fiddle, accordion and biniou present the melodies and the brass and percussion give a rhythmic support. While the group does not always succeed in providing the best beat for dancers, this is a group to watch.

Filifala. Vorona. This group includes Dina Rakotomanga (bass fiddle and song), Roland Conq (guitar), Yannig Noguet (accordion), and Jean-Pierre Andrieux (fiddle), with singer Roland Brou. The tme of the CD is birds (vorona = bird in the Madagascar language, lead singer Dina Rakotomanga's native language). Traditional songs of Gallo Brittany take on a new life and the CD also includes compositions for Breton dances with a swing from Madagascar.

Les Goristes. Kig ha Farz Mambo. Keltia Musique KMCD 190. Always politically incorrect in their satirical songs, this joyous group devotes this CD to bad food habits - celebrating lard and butter, as well as tobacco and wine. Fine voices and an international flavor to the musical arrangements help digest even the most tasteless humor.

Guichen. Dreams of Brittany. Coop Breizh/Label Productions. (www.freresguichen.com)

This is a new CD by Fred and Jean-Charles Guichen (masters of accordion and guitar) with compositions rooted in Breton dances. They are joined by Ray Fean (percussion), Philippe Turbin (piano) and Hervé Le Lu (bombarde). This CD won Best 2007 Album of 73 judged by a jury of musicians, Le Télégramme newspaper readers and journalists, and others involved in the music profession.

Kohann. Hypnotic. L'Oz Production L'OZ 50.

This is the third CD for Kohan (and lead singer Michèle Gaurin) who sings in Breton in a decisively modern techno-pop style. Her voice may not be loved by all reviewers, but this is another example of a creative new voice for the Breton language. A DVD is included for 3 cuts of the CD.

Samuel Le Henanff, Nicolas Quemeneur and Pol Jezequel. Three around the table. Keltia Musique RSCD 283.

I think one can say that no where in the world outside of Ireland can you find such a concentration of avid fans and accomplished performers of Irish music than in Brittany. Here's a trio to show this: Nicolas Quemeneur on guitar, Samuel Le Henanff on accordion and Pol Jezequel on flute, with traditional Irish reels, jigs, hornpipes and slow airs as well as a few Breton compositions.

Ramoneurs de Menirs. Dañs an diaoul. Du-man Du-hont DMDH 02, DB10.

The photo accompanying a review of this CD (Ar Men 161) shows four very tough and punk looking guys (two with mohawk haircuts) surrounding a friendly-looking woman who could be their indulgent mom. The "mom" is in fact Louise Ebrel, a well known traditional singer who is not new to experimental collaborations with instrumental groups. The guys are Eric Gorce and Richard Bévillon, a bombarde-biniou pair who take things to a radically new level with punk rocker Loran (on guitar) and Momo Jouanno who sings in his native Vannetais Breton. You will hear plin, laridé, gavotte pourlette and "traditional anarkopunk" in a forceful combination of pure punk rock style with traditional Breton voice and paired biniou-bombarde. "Dañs and diaoul" - dance of the devil.

Roger le Contou & Fred le disou. Encore plus fous que les radars ! Kerig KCD 190.

This is the eighth recoding by this very popular pair of Gallo language storytellers. They can be heard at festivals, cross country walks, veillées and on the radio. This CD draws on radio programs for France Bleu Armorique. Two

texts in Gallo are translated into French in the CD notes, giving a quick introduction to this unique language. This CD is a great way to get an earful of Gallo.

Joseph-Guy Ropartz. Musique de chambre. Timpini 1C1118.

This is a CD of classical chamber music by Breton composer Joseph-Guy Ropartz (1864-1955) performed by musicians of the Ensemble Stanislas of the City of Nancy.

Sloï. Musiques du monde d'ici. Cahpa-production 02/2 (www.sloi.net)

This is a group from the southeastern corner of Brittany and the Vendée with six musicians well known for their performance of the traditional music of this region. The group includes Sébastien Bertrand (accordion), Alain Peurec (veuze and bombarde), Alain Moreau (fiddle), Thierry Moreau (cello), Youenn Landreau (Chapman stick), Sylvain Fabre (percussions) and Stéphane Atrous (sax). Using traditional melodies and dances as a base the performance is influenced by everything from electro, ska and funk, to jazz and rock.

Suzy Solidor. "Au Cabaret" INA, LBC 002.

This is an anthology of recordings from 1937 to 1963 of memories and songs of Saint Malo born singer Suzy Solidor. Specializing in maritime song, this singer also sung texts by Verlaine, Cocteau, Prévert, Brassens and Ferré, some of whom were visitors to her Paris cabaret, La Vie Parisienne.

Alan Stivell. Terre des vivants. Keltia III - Harmonia Mundi KE3-105, Legend KE3-106, The Mists of Avalon KE3-107, 1Douar KE3-108, Back to Breizh KE3-109, Au-delà des mots KE3-110.

Six albums by Stivell have been remastered and re-released to enhance the vocals and instruments, bringing new life especially to the harp.

Tri Yann. Abysses. Marzelle-Vogue 88697-159242.

This long-lived folk-rock band plunges below the sea for this maritime-themed CD. With a unique medieval sound, this group still rocks on.

Anne Vanderlove. La Reverse. Avel Ouest - Coop Breizh. CD1 003.

Vanderlove's fine voice is accompanied by guitar and fiddle in a selection of songs on a variety of topics and from various composers (in French).

Yelle. (Julie Budet) Yelle. Source-etc. EMI 509995063322-7

Described as « electro-bretonne » this singer and composer sings and recites carefully constructed texts to a pop-electro beat. Daughter of François Budet (famous for his hit "Loguivy-de-la-mer") Yelle is inspired also by the music of her own generation and her compositions (and those also of Jean-François Perrier) bring a unique perspective to this CD.



A Travel Account from 1938

"Good Wind Pushing – Jottings of a Cycle Trip in Brittany, 1938" By Betty Bridgman

(*Canadian Geographical Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2, August 1944)

There was no shelter from those full winds off the Atlantic. They swept our bicycles across the granite bulk of Brittany, and fifty miles a day was nothing – if we went their way. But these winds were not given to sea-girt Brittany to help American tourists pedal along its coast. They fill the sails of Breton craft, and make this great jutting knob of land the home of the finest sailors and fisherfolk of France. Yet the cyclist too learns to wave his cap in the merry Breton manner and cry "*Bon vent me pousse* – there's a good wind pushing me!"

As soon as you leave the salt meadows of Mont St. Michel you know you are in Brittany. Dark headlands rise out of the bay, roads begin to climb hill after hill. Before your wheels bump across the cobblestones of St. Malo you have seen farmers threshing with flails, hobbled cows, and hand-turned cider presses at work on thatched farms. Women are wearing the white *coif* or top-knot cap of their district.

The strangeness of Brittany comes over you at once. Here are Frenchmen who are not French, who own no kinship with their countrymen. This region was Celtic five hundred years before Christ, and the Celts called it Armorica – the land near the sea. It reaches out almost wistfully toward western England and so it was to Armorica that persecuted Britons came when northern invaders swept over England after the Romans left. Armorica became a second Britain, or Brittany, and even now its people are more akin to the Cornish, Irish and Welsh than to the French.

Brittany became a part of France in the sixteenth century by accident, when Anne, duchess of this independent province, married two French kings in

succession, Charles VIII and Louis XII, and left a grandson heir to both kingdom and duchy. But in Basse Bretagne, or western Brittany, peasants still speak a Celtic tongue. The French language and government, and even the institutions of Christianity, have been superimposed upon a pagan people. It is a land of granite where rocks are feared and worshipped, where reign a multitude of saints Rome will not recognize, where life and death come from the sea and the winds that blow over it.

We walked along the sea-wall of St. Malo. The tide was running in around the small island where Chateaubriand, brilliant romantic, is buried. A packet boat from Jersey labored across choppy waves, making for the same harbor that Jacques Cartier hailed on his return from exploring the Canadian Coast. Cartier walked the heights of Quebec and climbed Mount Royal but he was born and died in St. Malo, and this harbor was home. For the Bretons were bold explorers. There is good reason to believe they fished the coast of Newfoundland before Columbus and that the name of Cape Breton Island commemorates their early voyages. Numbers of them came to New France as colonists in the seventeenth century as well, and their songs and customs still flourish in Eastern Canada.

At St. Malo we first saw the Brittany of Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale:" black rocks over which Dorigen wept for her husband's safety. This was to be the shoreline of Brittany from St. Malo around Brest to Quiberon – rocky islands, sheer cliffs. Côtes du Nord, Finistère, Morbihan – the very names of these *départements* sound like the thunder of an ocean against unyielding granite.

In Brittany no farmhouse hangs out the bed and breakfast sign we had looked for in England. We stopped at small spotless inns, wheeled our cycles (called Ariel and Pegasus) into the kitchen and ate lavish meals at low prices. Every morning, on a narrow street full of sunlight, we would pump up our tires and turn west into the arms of the wind. Beyond St. Malo few villages were encouraged to grow into towns, and village life was enchanting. We would look on, as at Yffiniac, while women scrubbed their linen on smooth stones in a little stream. Then they trundled the wash home in wheelbarrows and spread it on hedges in the sun.

Like all of Brittany's tourists, we had hoped to see a "pardon," that religious festival peculiar to Breton villages when music and costume and pilgrimages create a holiday mood, when you bring your cattle to be blessed at the church or watch a priest sprinkle

holy water on the sea. Late in September there are few annual pardons still to be held in Brittany, but we felt compensated after touring the market in Paimpol.

Shabby cyclists never happened on anything more delightful. We had expected a fishing village, the one celebrated by Pierre Loti in *Pêcheur d'Islande*, and at first were greatly disappointed; but an amused Paimpolais vindicated Pierre Loti by telling us that Iceland fishing has been taken over by St. Malo. I was annoyed. St. Malo is no fishing village; in spite of its appearance, suggesting the Lower Town of Quebec, it is now so modern that we had seen a Hollywood movie shown outdoors, in the public square.

But as we turned away there was a clatter on the cobblestones behind us. In gusty little groups, wide black skirts were whisking across the square and down a narrow street adjoining. Tuesday is market-day for Paimpol and all the region round. Traveling vendors had set up push-cart dry-goods shops in a tiny square. We braved the crowds for the sake of a new experience. Here was a boy shrugging into ready-made coats while his mother watched sharply. A woman burrowed through a cart full of cheap handbags. Shoe-strings, slippers, bolts of cloth, babies rattles – everything that cannot be made in a farm kitchen! This was the dime-store equivalent for Brittany.

We jostled our way down another street. In a larger square to the west stood an old bell-tower, the church of which had disappeared. The vegetable market spread around it. Horse-carts filled with cabbages, lettuce or beans milled around on the periphery. The fish market sheltered under a long dark shed, and here were all the second courses we had eaten in France. By now we were no strangers to snails, an *hors-d'oeuvre* on Breton menus; still, the sight of a wet vaguely moving heap of them made us shudder a little.

The air outside was very fresh in contrast. Now women were pushing past with loaded baskets – the eleven o'clock train was filling up; often they carried live chickens or a live hare by the legs, head-down. We walked up-stream to search for the live-stock market.

It was conducted very simply. Against a wall stood a line of old women wearing the cap of the Paimpolaise. Rain had just ceased so black umbrellas hung over their arms, and each held a live chicken or duck. Prospective buyers pinched the wares to see if they were fat enough for the price and

presumably after each old lady had sold her one fowl she went home content.

We went out of Paimpol to the west as part of a long procession of bicycles. Young women from sea-front farms had come under their own power. Their loads were much heavier than our small packs but they swayed past us without effort, their skirts blowing back in the wind. How did their pretty white caps stay on? The Paimpol *coif* is a steep-roofed shed of thin voile, with stiff white points hanging over the ears. The least breeze should waft it away, but we soon saw that it is gathered round a firm top-knot of hair and thus held fast.

We could not quite forgive Paimpol for giving up its Iceland fishing and Tréguier and Perros-Guirec were likewise disappointing. Were there no fishing villages left in Brittany? Because we were cyclists, however, we found solace in the open road. Towns were crammed with interest – far more so than in England – but the pink macadam west of Paimpol made our wheels spin eagerly on these days of autumn equinox, and the kilometer stones went by so quickly we could almost beat time by them. Everywhere the main roads were excellent. Inland from the coast, Brittany becomes a moor, and can nourish only heather, gorse, or bracken, so that views are wide and unbroken.

We mused on the plight of Breton trains. It was a misty morning in Morlaix and we were looking up from the harbor to the beautiful two-storied viaduct that spans the deep valley; 300 yards long and 194 feet high, it is a symbol of the desperation of civil engineers in these parts. Brittany was made long before railroads and with no consideration for them. The coast is slashed with the estuaries of tumultuous rivers, and the hills are, to an engineer, deplorable. In 1861, with the building of this viaduct, the main line from Paris managed to fight its way out to Brest, but then it lost all initiative and refused to cope with the rough terrain on either side of this line. Only a light railway can shuttle round the hills and serve some of the coastal villages. Train schedules are correspondingly awkward, and we were glad to be independent of them. Our British cycles could follow any road and gave us a low gear for hills.

Morlaix has more to show than a viaduct. Here Christmas-card houses crane over little streets. Milk carts clatter over the cobblestones. Half a dozen churches swing open their doors on curious musty interiors. Women take their wash to a dark little river that skulks through the centre or town.

In a one-sided street that runs on top of a wall we found a tottering house of the fifteenth century. *La Maison de la Duchesse-Anne*, named for the “petite Brette” who was twice Queen of France. It is a treasure-house of Breton culture. In its great hall a striking staircase winds up behind a carved wooden pillar. (This race of sailors became master carvers during the winter.) On the upper floors are dummies dressed in costumes of various sections of Brittany.

Do Parisians consider this region the most provincial in France? Let them see how Breton costume has been influenced by all countries of Europe and the East. Sailors brought home specimens of the dress of far-away lands – Russia, Serbia, Turkey – and details from these would appear on the black velvet bodices of the girls in Morlaix or on the wide black hats of the boys.

This old house had many of the *lits-clos* or beds with sliding doors. All were of very dark wood, richly carved. You climbed into bed from the foot and when you closed the doors behind, only a small hole, often heart-shaped, let in light and air. The *lit-clos* is still to be seen on wealthy farms in Basse Bretagne, but often its elaborate end-piece with the doors has been detached and turned into a buffet cupboard, for which it is well suited.

Writers find inspiration in the north coast of Brittany; we remembered Chateaubriand at St. Malo, Anatole Le Braz and Ernest Renan at Tréguier, Pierre Loti at Paimpol, and Sienkiewicz near Ploumanac’h. But the south coast attracts painters. Not all are as famous as Gauguin, who founded the “School of Pont-Aven” in that lovely river-village, but any one who can hold a brush is wildly excited by this sunny colorful coast, and he will eventually find his way to Douarnenez.

My growing impatience with former fishing villages that permit themselves to lapse into resorts subsided when we saw Douarnenez. We worked hard to reach it. Winds were still pushing us on the south coast – but from the front! It was late one afternoon when we coasted down off a high ridge into the little port, which pins a long peninsula to the mainland.

Our flight landed us in a blue and gold world, so enchanting we could hardly believe it real. The sun was very low over white Tréboul, which shares this tiny harbor with Douarnenez. And up the channel from the open sea came a fast fleet, motor-driven, of little boats with blue ghost-like sails, straight toward our pier. Soon we discovered their sails were really nets of filmy blue-green. These swung from every mast, drying, and flat brown corks weighted them at

one end. Their color complemented the saffron-red garb of the sailors, picturesque in wooden shoes and pancake berets.

When the boats were bobbing alongside the quay, fishermen sprang out and others passed them flat wooden trays filled with shining fish – sardines! We remembered then that Douarnenez is the most important sardine port in France. Eight hundred of these boats with sea-blue nets go out each morning during the season from June to December and return at sunset. Nets are hung straight down in the sea like curtains, and their color makes them invisible to the sardines, which get their gills caught in the mesh and are unable to jerk free.

The trays of sardines, piled on stretchers, were marched off up the quay to a small canning factory which fronted the harbor. We trailed along and obtained permission to go inside the factory.

The first room seemed pitch dark after the brilliant sunset outside, but we made out two long tables with approximately forty women and girls standing, knives in hand. They wore dainty white *coifs*, incongruous in a packing plant. Presently a man brought in the first load of sardines. Knives sprang into action. The tables grew gory in no time, and fish heads piled up in pails to be sold to farmers for fertilizer. The silver bodies of the sardines went on into the next room to be canned and boiled in olive oil.

Here was a canning machine of the simplest sort. One man operated it and girls placed the cans one by one to be sealed. They smiled at us, but the machine made too much noise for conversation. Soon the girls began to match its rhythm with a Breton song, a sweetly melancholy air. Its sadness was of the soul, a Celtic lament, and had nothing to do with the fact that their wages in our currency amounted to six cents an hour.

We went out of Douarnenez just before low tide uncovered the noisome mud of the harbor – so our last impression was one of complete sensory beauty.

Quimper (pronounced “camp-air”) is the chief cultural centre of the province, full of quaint loveliness, and faience. But for us Quimper was only a link between Douarnenez and Concarneau. We dropped down off a windy ridge where the smell of fish and brine blew against us and found a neat harbor tightly crammed with boats, whose pastel hulls jostled one another at the quay. These boats of Concarneau are large enough to carry a crew of ten or twelve on a fortnight’s voyage in the open sea. We tried to count

them from the high machicolated walls of the old *Cité* of Concarneau, which fills a tiny island in the harbor.

As our bicycles flew over the hills, we often stopped to see calvaires or stone crucifixes that mark cross-roads throughout Basse Bretagne. Stones still have a part in the religion of these folk, devout almost to the point of being superstitious. Near Trégastel we had seen a menhir fifteen feet high, erected centuries before Christ, which had been “converted” into a Christian monument by the addition of a wooden cross on top. Across its sunken chest were carved the instruments of the Passion. To us on that desolate hill-side it seemed a symbol of Breton Christianity, which has borrowed many of its trappings from the pagan faith that preceded it.

We were cycling back from Quiberon along the sandy spit of the *presqu’île*, a literal French rendering of the Latin “peninsula.” At one point a bare hundred yards of sand separates two blue bays, just enough land to carry the road and a lackadaisical little railway.

In those ten miles our bicycles carried us back nearly four thousand years from fashionable hotels on the Quiberon *plage* to the grim stone-age monuments at Carnac, “place of bones.” On a long plain north of the village thousands of great rude menhirs stand in regular rows, set up by a race that vanished before the Celts came to Armorica. Because Brittany abounds in such formations our names for them come straight from the Celtic tongue: menhir, a standing stone; dolmen, a table-like stone on uprights; cromlech, a stone circle.

We let our bicycles bump over rough pasture between the alignments of Le Ménec, largest of the fields of menhirs. Even at midday the gaunt boulders take weird shapes until you look directly at them. They seem grizzled and hoary, because of the lichens that cover them.

Once this section of the *département* of Morbihan must have been the Mecca of stone-age tribes for leagues around. The rows of menhirs at Carnac extend two and a half miles in all, with 2,813 huge stones. Nearly every field of them serves as an approach to a stone circle, more simple in construction than Stonehenge, but oriented like Stonehenge in relation to the rising sun. The largest boulders are at the western end nearest the circle. When we looked east along the rows, centuries fell away, and we could imagine a great crowd shuffling forward, pressing toward the cromlech where their priests were performing gruesome rites of sacrifice.

Legends have grown up about the alignments at Carnac and persistent children will tell you, for a few *sous*, that the huge blocks of granite are pagan warriors who pursued St. Cornély until he turned them into stone.

The highest point near Carnac is a man-made hill or barrow called the Tumulus of St. Michel, named for the Breton “saint of high places.” The tumulus forty feet in height and more than three times as much in length, is overgrown with flowers and brambles and has a small chapel on one end. Escorted by a housewife who lived nearby, we walked straight through the mound the long way.

A string of electric lights cast eerie shadows along the low damp tunnel. Cinerary vessels and bones were found here when the barrow was opened in 1862, and these remains have gone off to the Musée Miln-Le Rouzic in Carnac. A dolmen is at the center, and now we realized that all dolmens were originally covered with great mounds of earth and rocks like the Tumulus of St. Michel, but erosion over thousands of years, and the fact that local farmers stripped off the soil to spread on their fields, have denuded most of them.

Almost as much as Carnac, the nearby village of Locmariaquer bristles with stone-age relics. The largest menhir in the world stood there, seventy-six feet high and fully twelve feet thick at its base – a single block of granite. It was taller than most trees. Lightning must have struck it many times, but in the eighteenth century a bolt shattered it and now it lies across a field in four great pieces, one of which is forty feet long. This forgotten race of men could do astounding things with the most primitive methods, but none other of their works can rival this fallen giant of Men-er-’Hroec’h, the “fairy stone.”



Our bicycles had taken us forward in space and backward in time and it was only now when most of Brittany lay behind us, that we sensed the strange background of this land, which seemed to thrust our a clenched fist to the wild Atlantic. Here at Carnac we could imagine that our lives were rooted in the forbidding granite of Morbihan, that we had stood here as long as these shaggy menhirs, leaning on the fresh wind, watching the sea. When we turned our cycles inland, up the Loire, we felt at our backs four thousand years or fierce headstrong history, and the wind dropped behind.

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